Why Unmanaged Situations Are Everywhere

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And How We Can Prevent Them

Every day, in every sector, we encounter unmanaged situations. We stand in long queues at grocery stores because insufficient staff were assigned at predictable peak hours. We wait endlessly at airport check-in counters because no one anticipated the morning wave of travellers. We read about airport reconstruction projects exceeding their budgets threefold. We learn that hospitals run sudden multimillion-franc deficits. We experience IT systems collapsing, projects stalling, and customer service lines overwhelmed.

These are not coincidences. They are not bad luck. They are not isolated incidents.

They are the visible symptoms of a deeper phenomenon:

organizations operating in an unmanaged state.

Unmanaged does not mean “no management.” It means outdated, misaligned, or incomplete management — systems designed for a world that no longer exists. When the environment becomes dynamic, interconnected, and unpredictable, traditional management no longer holds. Organizations that do not evolve become stuck in unmanaged patterns, and their weaknesses surface as crises, delays, deficits, and failures.

But unmanaged states are preventable. And they are curable — quickly, safely, and systematically — when leaders understand how to observe them, measure them, and improve them using the tools now available: the Global Executive Survey, Organization Twins, and the Mastery of

Management methodology developed in *Unmanaged*.

This article explores why unmanaged events are so common and how leaders can move from unmanaged to mastery.

The World Is Full of Unmanaged Situations — If We Look

Modern organizations produce unmanaged events every day. We simply got used to them. Like chronic pain, they become part of the background noise of life.

1. Everyday Failures That Should Not Happen

- Long queues at check-out, airport security, and customs.
- Service hotlines overloaded, with waiting times of 45 minutes or more.
- Retail shelves empty, even for standard items.
- Public transport delays with no information, no alternatives, and no ownership.

These failures feel like “normal inconveniences,” yet they are anything but normal. They represent a lack of anticipation, inadequate feedback loops, and poor allocation of resources — all management failures.

2. Public Infrastructure and Government Failures

- Airport or rail construction projects exceeding budgets by billions.
- Public IT systems launched and then abandoned.
- Power outages due to unmanaged maintenance.
- Procurement processes stuck in bureaucratic loops.

These failures have massive economic consequences. Their root cause is always the same: outdated management models that cannot handle complexity.

3. Healthcare and Education

- Emergency rooms overcrowded for 12 hours.
- Hospitals declaring sudden deficits.
- Schools lacking teachers and cancelling classes.
- Universities running unsustainable programs without oversight.

These failures show unmanaged capacity, unmanaged finances, and unmanaged strategic alignment.

4. Corporate Operations

- IT systems crashing repeatedly.
- ERP implementations failing in their 3rd or 4th iteration.
- Quality defects causing production stops.
- Product launches delayed because cross-functional work breaks down.

These are not technical failures. They are coordination and capability failures — management failures.

5. Leadership and Governance

- CEOs overestimating their abilities (the Dunning–Kruger effect).
- Boards discovering problems years too late.
- M&A integrations failing.
- Strategy drifts because no one monitors the management system.

When governance fails, the unmanaged becomes inevitable.

6. Customer Experience

- Airlines losing luggage systematically.
- Hotels with no rooms despite confirmed bookings.
- Delivery firms missing time slots repeatedly.
- Subscription churn accepted as a business model.

Unmanaged customer experience quickly becomes unmanaged

performance.

7. Culture and People

- Burnout waves.
- Toxic environments.
- Silence cultures.
- Attrition crises that “nobody saw coming.”

All are signs of unmanaged relationships and unmanaged learning.

Why So Many Organizations Are Unmanaged

We call these events “unmanaged” not because leaders fail intentionally, but because the management systems they rely on are built for stability, not for complexity. They focus on control, efficiency, and hierarchy. But today’s world demands adaptability, human-centricity, and dynamic capability.

Traditional management assumes:

- predictability
- repeatability
- linearity

But organizations now operate in environments that are:

- unpredictable
- non-linear
- interconnected
- fast-changing

This mismatch creates unmanaged states. They accumulate silently. Leaders do not see them because traditional dashboards hide them. Boards do not detect them because information is filtered. Crises emerge suddenly — though they were predictable long before.

The reality is simple:

Unmanaged events are symptoms, not causes.

They show that the organization's *management capabilities* — the abilities to sense, decide, act, learn, and adapt — are underdeveloped or misaligned.

Seeing the Unmanaged: The Global Executive Survey

The first step toward curing unmanaged states is *seeing* them.

Most leaders do not see unmanaged situations because the signals are weak or buried. The Global Executive Survey changes that.

It provides:

- a comprehensive capability profile of the organization
- with 135 data points capturing how work gets done
- across diagnostic, systemic, human, holistic, regenerative, integrated, distributed, unique, and interactive dimensions

It reveals fine nuances that leaders normally overlook:

- gaps between strategy and execution
- governance blindspots
- cultural tensions
- decision bottlenecks
- missing dynamic capabilities
- underdeveloped learning loops

The Survey surfaces unmanaged states before they become visible crises.

It has been used with 500 organizations worldwide and provides a robust baseline for any improvement journey.

Understanding and Fixing the Unmanaged: Organization Twins

Seeing unmanaged states is one thing.

Understanding *why* they occur — and how to fix them — is another.

This is where Organization Twins come in.

An Organization Twin is a diagnostic, interactive model of the organization's management system. It does not simulate operations. It simulates management — the patterns, capabilities, relationships, and dynamics through which work gets done.

Leaders use it to:

- visualize the structure of their management system
- compare their organization with best-in-class twins
- identify which capabilities are weak or missing
- conduct safe "what-if" experiments
- create alignment across executive teams
- accelerate learning through focus and awareness

Importantly, Organization Twins create a safe space for leadership teams:

- they shift conversations from people to patterns
- they reduce defensiveness
- they make improvement objective and actionable

Instead of asking, "Who failed?" they help leaders ask:

"Which management capabilities are unmanaged?"

This shift accelerates learning and reduces resistance.

From Unmanaged to Mastery: A Reliable Journey

The book *Unmanaged* provides the methodology to move from unmanaged states to Mastery in Management using nine attributes:

- Diagnostic
- Systemic
- Human

- Holistic
- Regenerative
- Integrated
- Distributed
- Unique
- Interactive

These attributes form a new standard for good management — just as ISO standards form the basis for quality.

Organizations evolve through five stopovers:

Assessment → Adoption → Adaptation → Evolution → Perfection

Using the Survey and the Twin, they follow a flexible improvement path:

- Identify unmanaged areas
- Strengthen management capabilities
- Learn through guided self-discovery
- Align the executive team
- Build regenerative, adaptive, human-centric systems
- Achieve reliable and sustainable performance

Instead of “muddling through,” leaders achieve clarity, choice, and mastery.

How the Tools Prevent and Cure Unmanaged Events

Let’s return to the unmanaged events we observe daily and explore how they can be prevented or cured:

Long queues at airports or check-outs

Cause: unmanaged capacity, unmanaged forecasting

Fix: Twins highlight bottlenecks, Survey shows coordination deficits, Mastery builds capability for dynamic resource planning.

Hospital deficits

Cause: unmanaged finances, unmanaged strategic choices

Fix: Survey identifies misalignment; Twin supports scenario analysis.

Infrastructure project overruns

Cause: unmanaged complexity, unmanaged collaboration

Fix: Mastery of systemic and interactive management reduces coordination failures.

IT outages and collapsing systems

Cause: unmanaged architecture, unmanaged learning

Fix: Regenerative management builds resilience, Twins expose hidden weaknesses.

Burnout waves and attrition

Cause: unmanaged culture, unmanaged workload

Fix: Human and holistic attributes provide anti-fragility.

Failing customer experiences

Cause: unmanaged relationships, unmanaged adaptation

Fix: Interactive and distributed management improve responsiveness.

In every case:

- unmanaged situations originate in the management system
- they become visible as events
- and they can be systematically prevented

Traditional management reacts after crises.

Mastery in Management prevents them.

Why Prevention Is the New Leadership Imperative

In politics, the standard response to crises is always the same:

form a committee, investigate what went wrong, produce a report, and issue recommendations.

By the time the report is published:

- leaders have changed
- systems have evolved
- people have moved on
- the crisis is forgotten
- the learnings are lost

This is reactive management — and it dominates business as well.

But we now have tools that make prevention possible:

- The Global Executive Survey detects unmanaged states early.
- Organization Twins reveal the roots and provide a safe learning environment.
- Mastery of Management gives leaders the standards to replace outdated approaches.

This is not theory.

It is 25 years of research across 500 organizations worldwide.

A Different Way: From Muddling Through to Mastery

We do not need more committees, reports, thought-leadership summits, or new management phrases.

We need *better management*.

Better management creates:

- faster decisions
- adaptive organizations
- healthier cultures
- better use of resources
- fewer crises
- and more sustainable performance

Mastering management is the missing lever for performance,

resilience, and competitiveness in today's world.

Every unmanaged event you see is a sign that an organization has not yet made this shift.

The good news:

The journey to mastery is now accessible, fast, and evidence-based.

The Global Executive Survey reveals unmanaged areas.

Organization Twins show how to fix them.

The Mastery methodology builds lasting capability.

This is how organizations move from unmanaged to managed — and from managed to mastery.

Conclusion: You Can See the Unmanaged Everywhere — And You Can Change It

The unmanaged is not rare.

It is all around us.

Every queue, every delay, every overrun, every burnout wave, every IT outage, every customer complaint — all are evidence.

Once you learn to see it, you cannot unsee it.

But unmanaged states are not fate.

With the right tools, they become preventable, curable, and transformable.

Leaders no longer need to muddle through.

They can reach mastery.

And organizations no longer need to wait for crises.

They can evolve — and thrive — before they are forced to.

About Management Insights

Founded by Lukas Michel, Management Insights draws on more than 25 years of research and practice to help people understand

how their organizations work. The Organization Twin brings organizational patterns into view for reflection, dialogue, and informed choice.

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